

PURDUE UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL MEDIA CONFERENCE

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Head Coach Jeff Brohm

JEFF BROHM: Well, we've got a tremendous challenge and a great opportunity this week to go to Iowa and play the No. 2 team in the country. Iowa is playing at a high level. Defense has been off the charts, getting turnovers, getting stops, getting interceptions. Done a tremendous job with that.

Offensively they control the football, run the ball, really good running back, offensive line, play action off of it, and right now they're playing with a lot of confidence.

It'll be a great test for our team, and hopefully we have a good week of practice and we try to raise our level of play and go up there and compete and try to come out there on a good note.

Q. Did you get done what you wanted to accomplish in the off week?

JEFF BROHM: We had a good off week, got some guys healthy, researched some things about ourselves and trying to find ways to get better. It's really about finding ways to win, being more efficient on offense, being better in the red zone.

Defensively being aggressive but yet not getting balls thrown over our heads at the safety position and stopping the run at the same time.

Special teams we've got to get a little better there. A lot of things we worked on, and we look forward to hopefully seeing -- putting them to use this week and seeing if we can improve and get better.

Q. You'd said Wednesday that Payne Durham was going to go through your Sunday practice. How did he come out of that and kind of his prognosis for the week?

JEFF BROHM: I think Payne Durham, as long as everything goes okay, should be ready to play by Saturday.

Q. Same with Cory Trice. Is this the week you think he'll get back?

JEFF BROHM: Cory Trice, I would be optimistic he would be back. Zander, we're not optimistic this week but we're working through that, and Abdur-Rahmaan Yaseen will be out this week.

Q. Just the impact of your transfers up to this point. What have you liked about what they've done for you? Are they filling the holes that you thought they would fill when you brought them in?

JEFF BROHM: I think we tried to improve our football team, even the roster at the end of the season, get any transfers that we thought could help our team and benefit our program. I feel like all those guys have done a good job to this point.

Some guys have been on the field more than others. Others are getting closer. But I do feel like they've added good competition. They've been good teammates, and I'm glad we've made the slight adjustments to the roster that we did.

Q. Has Mitchell maybe been the biggest impact or is there another guy that comes to mind that you feel really has contributed? Mitchell directly scores points for you, but of the guys that have come in, who do you think has made the biggest impact so far?

JEFF BROHM: Well, like I said, I think all of them have done a really good job on offense. Tyler Witt has started every game for us on the offensive line, so he's been an addition. I think Broc Thompson with a couple injuries we have at the receiver position will continue to emerge, and he's been a great addition, a great leader for our team.

Of course Mitchell has been accurate kicking the football and done a really good job there. He's been good in practice, works extremely hard. Even from day one we've liked what we saw, but he's a competitor, as well, so we're hopeful that he can continue to create points for us.

There's other guys on defense that have been contributors to certain degrees as well that have played and will continue to get better.

Q. You mentioned Iowa creating as many turnovers as they have through six games; as you look at their season, what are you seeing in that turnover trend there that they've been able to get so many?

JEFF BROHM: Well, they're coached very well. They understand the package. Iowa is a team we studied greatly in the off-season on both sides of the ball just to get a feel for exactly what we're doing defensively.

They've been at the top for the last few years, and really they pride themselves on eyes on the quarterback, a lot of zone coverage. They've adapted and adjusted to a certain degree where they're not giving up big plays over their head. The first couple of years we were able to hit a couple of those on them, and they do no give up those anymore.

They do a really good job playing tight enough but yet far enough off that you're not going to throw it over their head. They don't allow you down the middle of the field very much. They do a really good with their safeties of cheating that to a certain degree to make sure that you're not going to get a cheap pass down the middle, which is extremely smart.

But they're veteran coaches, veteran players. I feel like the secondary has been the same guys for the last four years. Linebackers play downhill, and their D-line plays physical and does a really good job of -- from an offensive standpoint, there's a lot of times you think you have the numbers to get runs on them - every team does - and the motion normally gets about four yards. So creating big plays in the running game has been hard for a lot of teams to do unless the quarterback scrambles or makes a play.

So those are things that they just do a really good job of, and they're not going to beat themselves. Their offense does a great job of protecting the ball, running it, controlling the clock, limiting possessions, hitting some play action off of it, and they're really good on special teams.

Well-coached, and right now they're playing with a ton of confidence, and they definitely are an outstanding opponent that we'll have our hands full.

Q. Coming up will be the halfway mark for your season. You mentioned defensively not getting balls thrown over your head from the safety position. What's the next step other than that for this defense to improve and make progress here in the last half?

JEFF BROHM: We want to continue to see guys emerge. I think that stopping the run is always a priority, and we've done a good job at times of that. Now, we commit quite a bit to doing that, and there's got to be some times where we play a little more pass coverage and can still stop the run, so to do that your defensive linemen and linebackers got to strike and get off blocks and make plays without getting extra guys in the box, so we have to have a little better balance of doing that.

I think our corners have done a really good job. They've challenged routes. They've been very aggressive. I think our safeties will continue to get better. Supporting the run is important, but also in certain coverages that's a position that you can't get the ball thrown over your head, and we have had that happen too many times, so we've got to continue to work on that, which we have.

We have veteran players on the defensive side of the ball, a lot of guys that have played, a lot of guys that have played a lot of football and been through some good moments and some bad moments where they've learned from it, and I think they'll continue to get better.

In order for us to win, we're going to have to have all three segments playing at a high level going against the competition we're going to face.

Q. When you started the year, did you think you would have to blitz more on defense, or did the fact that the progress of the defensive line has made curtailed that a little bit, they're getting kind of the pressure that you want, you haven't had to do that yet?

JEFF BROHM: Well, you need to have a perfect balance, and it all depends on personnel and where you think your team is at. I do think committing a lot of guys into the box has helped us against the run, challenging routes and guarding things tighter initially has allowed our pass rush a little more time to get in there and make plays instead of having so much cushion, and yet at the same time you have to have that perfect balance of knowing when to do that and when not to.

We'll continue to try to advance the defense and get better. I do think that there's a lot of things we haven't run yet that we have in and at our disposal, and we've got

to continue to add the perfect mix based on who we play, and I'm looking forward to watching them continue to improve.

Q. You're 3-1 against Iowa. Just talk about maybe what's been your knack, I guess, to have the upper hand on those guys during your tenure at Purdue?

JEFF BROHM: Well, Iowa is a very disciplined, good football team, so you can't beat yourselves when you play them. We have at times had the ability to throw the football, maybe more so than some other Big Ten teams, so that probably has helped us to a certain degree.

But yet they've adapted and adjusted, and we have to figure out ways to score points. Whether that's by the air or by the ground or any way we can do it, we have to score points, and they do a great job of limiting points, they do a great job of getting turnovers.

Their defense continues to improve just when you think that they're getting daggone good already, but right now they're playing at a very high level, and they're very confident, and the offense has been efficient with a good running back, veteran quarterback, tight ends and an offensive line that know how to come off the ball and strike people, and they're definitely winning football games each and every week, and they've done that for the last two years. They've even done it before, but they've been very, very good the last two years.

Q. Have you seen anything like their knack to get takeaways at any time in your career? It's been something to witness.

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think the main thing they do is they're a zone football team that their eyes are on the quarterback, and they're going to adjust and tweak that zone like they have this year to allow their pass rush to get in there, and if a team isn't performing well at all 11 positions on offense and there's some weak link, they're going to find it. They're going to have their eyes strapped on the quarterback, break on the ball and make plays, and they've done that against every single opponent they've had. We have to figure out a way to not allow that to happen but yet still be aggressive.

Q. Austin Burton, I guess his week of practice and maybe the role you see him having moving forward here.

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think that all of our options are on the table, and we have a room of quarterbacks that have all played and they all have to be ready to play. Whatever we feel like we need to do to win, we're going to do. Our quarterbacks are on board. Whoever is in there I think will give it their all and give us everything they have and play to win. So we'll have to have a little bit of creativity and make sure that we utilize all their talents.

Q. Obviously you're not looking back at previous games as an indicator of this season, but Iowa is a team that you guys defeated last season. You already mentioned that they're a team you study pretty extensively. What

strides have they made? You've already talked about takeaways on defense, but what other strides do you think Iowa has made this season to have everything come together this season to be where they are right now?

JEFF BROHM: Well, they've got veterans on defense, and every year they just -- because we watch them so much, you can tell they tweak the package a little bit. The way they play their zone is extremely smart. They don't give up the big plays, don't give up anything down the middle. Their eyes are on the quarterback. They break on the ball. The corners don't play a mile off, but they give you enough cushion that they're not going to give up a big play.

Our first year we went down there 4-6 and we threw a couple balls over their head. Well, they don't allow that anymore. We'll try -- you can try to do that, but they don't allow balls over their head, and they're very good against the run with a limited box. They're going to play pass coverage and line up for the pass and still be able to play the run with the guys they have.

That's just how they play, and it's tough to move the football on them. When you go to throw the ball, if anything gets out of whack or you've got to get rid of it faster than you want, their eyes are glued on the quarterback and they make picks. Offensively their offensive line plays well, the quarterback is a veteran, the running back is really good, and they've got tight ends that they utilize in the passing game along with the receivers. They're not going to beat themselves.

Special teams they always have a couple tricks in the hat that they're not secured to use. They just play efficient football. It's been their formula for a long time. I think right now they're carrying it out better than they have even in their recent past, and they're a top-notch opponent right now.

Q. And then with the optimism that Cory Trice can get on the field this week, where does Jamari Brown fall in the cornerback rotation? Obviously Dedrick is a guy you have confidence in. Just what goes into managing those three and their playing time throughout the week and things like that?

JEFF BROHM: All three of those corners will play. They've all proved that they can play very efficient and effective football for us. We'll just be able to rotate them in there more a little bit if we have to, and some nickel packages might be a possibility getting all three on the field. These guys are playing on a running football team, so we won't probably be in it as much as you normally would, but all three guys have played very well this year, and they'll continue to play.

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